

BIOGRAPHY

Herbert Vivian (3 April 1865 – 18 April 1940) was a British journalist, author and newspaper proprietor. During the 1880s he formed friendships with, amongst others, Lord Randolph Churchill, Charles Russell and Leopold Maxse. He campaigned for Irish Home Rule and was the private secretary to the poet and writer Wilfrid Blunt when he stood in the 1888 Deptford by-election. His writings caused the rift between his friends Oscar Wilde and James McNeill Whistler.

In the 1890s, Vivian was a leader of the Neo-Jacobite Revival, a monarchist movement which aimed to restore a member of the House of Stuart on the British throne, in place of the parliamentary system. In the decade before the First World War, he was a friend of Winston Churchill, and was the first journalist to interview Churchill. He stood, unsuccessfully, as the Liberal candidate for Deptford in 1906. Vivian was an extreme monarchist throughout his life, and in the 1920s he became a supporter of fascism.

Vivian published several books, including the novel *The Green Bay Tree* with W. H. Wilkins. He was a prominent British Serbophile and his writings about the Balkans, notably *Servia: The Poor Man's Paradise* and *The Servian Tragedy: With Some Impressions of Macedonia*, remain influential.

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

Herbert Vivian was born on 3 April 1865 in Chichester, the only son of the Reverend Francis Henry and Margaret Vivian. He was baptised by his father on 11 May 1865 at the church of St. Peter the Great in Chichester. He had one sister, Margaret Cordelia Vivian. His grandfather John Vivian was the Liberal MP for Truro, and owned Pencalenick House in St Clement, Cornwall; Herbert recalled shooting his first rabbit there as a child. He always glossed over his grandfather's political role, for example, writing: "None of my immediate relatives have ever troubled their heads in politics..." in his newspaper *The Whirlwind*.

Herbert studied at Harrow School from 1879 until 1883. When he was 14, he was introduced to an old friend of his father's, Thomas Hughes, the author of *Tom Brown's School Days*. The meeting had a strong impact on the young Vivian, who wrote about it later in his memoir. In 1881, his grandfather introduced him to Thomas Bayley Potter, the member of parliament for Rochdale. Potter was impressed by Vivian and often took him into Parliament during his holidays. There Vivian met many of the MPs, and was particularly impressed by Charles Warton, the MP for Bridport. Potter also introduced him to Lord Randolph Churchill, who greatly inspired Vivian towards Tory democracy. Vivian exchanged letters with Lord Randolph during his school days and continued to correspond with him for many years afterwards. Vivian later became friends with his son, Winston Churchill.

Vivian studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, graduating in 1886 with a degree in History, and subsequently being promoted to a Master of Arts. During his student years, Vivian and his friend Edward Goulding were the President and Vice-President respectively of the University Carlton Club and they invited Lord Randolph to become the club president. Never shy of using his connections, Vivian dropped Churchill's name to arrange a meeting in Vevey with Nubar Pasha, the first Prime Minister of Egypt. After spending several hours discussing politics with Pasha, he returned to London and reported his conversation to Churchill. Churchill

introduced Vivian to Charles Russell—who later became Baron Russell of Killowen and the Lord Chief Justice of England—and the two became friends. Around 1882, Vivian attended a lecture given by Oscar Wilde at which James McNeill Whistler was also present and which Vivian would later write about (see Oscar Wilde).

At Cambridge, Vivian struck up friendships with students who would go on to be prominent politicians and businessmen. Austen Chamberlain was involved in Cambridge Union politics when Vivian arrived, and the two bonded over a shared interest in Radicalism. He was a close friend of Leopold Maxse—later the editor of the National Review. Another friend was Ernest Debenham, who went on to lead the family business Debenhams to its greatest commercial success. Vivian recalled Debenham overdosing on hashish during his experiments in Buddhism at Cambridge.

PRIVATE SECRETARY TO WILFRID BLUNT

Vivian and Chamberlain organised speaking events at the Union. In 1886, they invited Wilfrid Scawen Blunt to speak on the subject of Irish Home Rule, and Vivian and Blunt became friends. Vivian visited Blunt at his home, Crabbet Park and accepted a position as Blunt's private secretary. Vivian spent most of his weekends at Crabbet during his final year of studies, and continued to work for Blunt after he graduated. During this employment he met influential politicians, as Blunt prepared to stand for Parliament. Amongst those that Vivian established a relationship with was Anglo-French historian Hilaire Belloc. Blunt was a cousin of Lord Alfred Douglas and was a friend of Oscar Wilde's; it was at one of Blunt's parties that Vivian first met Wilde socially.

1887 saw Blunt becoming more vociferous in favour of Irish Home Rule. In November, Lord Randolph wrote to Vivian advising him to distance himself from Blunt, advice Vivian did not take. Blunt was also developing his interest in the Jacobite cause at this time, which Vivian was to develop a passion for during his life.

In late 1887, Vivian left the Conservative Party and joined the Home Rule Union between the Liberal Party and the Irish Parliamentary Party. At the end of the year, he toured Ireland with the leading Irish politician Michael Davitt and Bradford Central MP George Shaw-Lefevre. Shortly after Vivian returned from Ireland he met with the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party Charles Stewart Parnell and then with the MP for East Mayo, John Dillon. In early 1888, Blunt spoke at a rally in Woodford, County Galway which had been banned by Arthur Balfour, the Chief Secretary for Ireland. He was arrested, tried and imprisoned. While Blunt was serving his sentence in Dublin, Vivian worked closely with William John Evelyn to promote Blunt in the February 1888 Deptford by-election—which had been caused by Evelyn's resignation as the Conservative MP. Blunt lost the by-election by 275 votes. Despite this loss, in March 1888, Blunt and Vivian were approached by a committee from Parnell's Irish National League, asking Blunt to stand as their candidate for Deptford at the next general election, but by the time the election was called in 1892, Blunt's enthusiasms had moved on.

For a while, Vivian contributed to Evelyn's Abinger Monthly Record, a magazine that Vivian later described as "[in] part... really scurrilous attacks on the Vicar". The Vicar was the Reverend T.P. Hill, the incumbent of Abinger who had fallen out with Evelyn. The Record was also noted for its campaign against compulsory vaccinations and its support of Irish Home Rule.

OSCAR WILDE

During the late 1880s, Vivian was a friend of Oscar Wilde, and they dined together on several occasions. It was at one of these dinners that Vivian claimed he witnessed a famous exchange between Wilde and James McNeill Whistler. Whistler said a bon mot that Wilde found particularly witty, Wilde exclaimed that he wished that he had said it, and Whistler retorted "You will, Oscar, you will".

In 1889, Vivian published this anecdote in his article *The Reminiscences of a Short Life* which appeared in *The Sun*. The article alleged that Wilde had a habit of passing off other people's witticisms as his own—especially Whistler's. Wilde considered Vivian's article to be scurrilous and a betrayal, and it directly caused the broken friendship between Wilde and Whistler. The *Reminiscences* also caused great acrimony between Wilde and Vivian, Wilde accusing Vivian of "the inaccuracy of an eavesdropper with the method of a blackmailer" and banishing Vivian from his circle. Following this incident, Vivian and Whistler became friends, exchanging letters for many years.

NEWSPAPER PUBLISHING AND THE NEO-JACOBITE REVIVAL

Portrait of Charles Bradlaugh MP, by Walter Sickert, from the first issue of *The Whirlwind*

Wreath laying at the statue of Charles I by The Legitimist Club in 1897

The late 1880s and 1890s saw a Neo-Jacobite Revival in Britain, which started in 1886, when Bertram Ashburnham founded the Order of the White Rose. The Order embraced causes such as Irish, Cornish, Scottish and Welsh independence, Spanish and Italian Legitimism, and particularly Jacobitism. Its members included Frederick Lee, Henry Jenner, Whistler, Robert Edward Francillon, Charles Augustus Howell, Stuart Richard Erskine and Vivian. The Order published its own paper, *The Royalist*, from 1890 to 1903.

Vivian had first met Erskine when they were enrolled in a journalism school together. In 1890, Vivian and Erskine founded a weekly newspaper *The Whirlwind*, A Lively and Eccentric Newspaper, with Vivian as editor. *The Whirlwind* was noted for publishing illustrations by artists including Whistler and Walter Sickert; Sickert was also the art critic of *The Whirlwind*, and wrote a weekly column. It also carried articles about Oscar Wilde at the height of his fame and notoriety. The paper espoused an Individualist and Jacobite political view, championed by Erskine and Vivian. One of the notable illustrations produced by Sickert for *The Whirlwind* was a portrait of Charles Bradlaugh. Bradlaugh also wrote an article on "practical individualism" for the paper.

The Whirlwind was criticised by Victor Yarros for its anti-semitic stance, which was primarily espoused by Vivian in his editorials. In the 23 August 1890 edition, he wrote: "The Jews are a race rather than a religious body, and, like the Chinese, are often obnoxious to their neighbours. By their financial craft they have acquired a dangerously extensive power, not merely over individuals, but even over the policy of states... the proper way to deal with Jews is a rigorous boycott... What should be aimed at is the return of the whole Jewish race, as speedily as

may be, to Palestine... the countries of their adoption would assuredly have no difficulty in sparing them".

Vivian used his editorship to promote his political and social views, including individualism for girls, the menace of London's tramways and repeated attacks on Henry Morton Stanley and other popular figures of the age. He also published a series of autobiographical articles under the title *Reminiscences of a Short Life* which later formed the basis of his 1923 memoir *Myself* not least, being the personal reminiscences of "X." The paper went on hiatus in early 1891, when Vivian stood for election, and did not restart publication.

The Order of the White Rose split in 1891. It had always been a primarily nostalgic and artistic organisation. Vivian and Erskine wanted to pursue a more militant political agenda, and together with Melville Henry Massue—who styled himself the Marquis of Ruvigny—they founded the rival Legitimist Jacobite League of Great Britain and Ireland, sometimes using the name the White Rose League. The Central Executive Committee of the League were: Walter Clifford Mellor, Vivian, George G. Fraser, Massue, the Baron Valdez of Valdez, Alfred John Rodway, and R.W. Fraser, with Erskine as President. Pittock described the League as a "publicist for Jacobitism on a scale unwitnessed since the Eighteenth Century".

The League organised a series of protests and events, often centred on statues of Jacobite heroes. In late 1892, they applied to the government for permission to lay wreaths at the statue of Charles I at Charing Cross, on the anniversary of his execution. Permission was refused by Prime Minister Gladstone, and it was George Shaw-Lefevre, Vivian's onetime travelling companion and now the First Commissioner of Works, who enforced the order. The League attempted to lay their wreaths anyway on 30 January 1893. Police were dispatched to stop the League and after a confrontation, Vivian and other League members were allowed to complete their ceremony. The League obtained significant coverage in the press. The political reporter for the *Lancashire Evening Post* wrote: "Mr. Herbert Vivian has been successful at last in placing a wreath upon the Statue of Charles the First....We trust all parties will feel the better for the operation—especially the bronze statue", while the article in the *Western Morning News* said: "A bold and daring man is Mr. Herbert Vivian, Jacobite and journalist... He announces to all and sundry that, law or no law, he will... attempt to lay a wreath on the statue. I have not heard whether special precautions have yet been taken to cope with this new force of disorder though, perhaps... one constable may be set apart to overawe Mr. Herbert Vivian".

In June 1893, there was a split between Ruvigny and Vivian, and Vivian attempted to continue to League with the support of Viscount Dupplin, Mellor and others. Vivian left the Jacobite League in August 1893, but continued to promote a strongly Jacobite political philosophy.

In 1892 and 1893, Vivian worked as a journalist for William Ernest Henley at the *National Observer*. In 1894, he published *The Green Bay Tree* with his college friend and anti-immigrant writer William Henry Wilkins. Vivian also contributed to Wilkin's monthly periodical *The Albermarle*, which was co-edited by their mutual Cambridge friend Hubert Crackanthorpe. He spent the winter of 1894/5 in France, discussing Jacobite and Carlist politics with the poet François Coppée, and contemporary literature with the novelist Émile Zola.

Vivian continued to write political journalism after *The Whirlwind* closed. In 1895, he was editor of another newspaper, *The White Cockade*, whose principal purpose was to put forward the Jacobite argument. It received poor reviews, and was not a success. Vivian was described in the *Bristol Mercury* as a "volatile young gentleman [who] enjoys a European reputation in the spheres of politics and literature".

By 1897, Vivian was the President of the Legitimist Club, another Neo-Jacobite organisation. In 1898, Vivian published letters he had exchanged with the Office of Works demanding that the Club be allowed to lay a wreath at the Statue of James II, Trafalgar Square on 16 September, the anniversary of James' death. Vivian's wreath laying, tactics and use of the press to publicise his cause, remained the same. Vivian remained president of the Club until at least 1904.

WRITING CAREER

Frontispiece of Herbert Vivian's book *The Servian Tragedy*, published in 1904

Following his departure from the Jacobite League in 1893, Vivian became the travel correspondent of Arthur Pearson's paper *Pearson's Weekly*. In February 1896, he launched and was editor of a new weekly newspaper called *Give and Take*, which was noted for offering its readers coupons for "a selected set of tradesmen". The paper does not appear to have been a success.

In 1898, Vivian returned to the profession of travel correspondent, first for the *Morning Post* (1898-1899) and then for Pearson's newly-founded *Daily Express* (1899-1900). In 1901 and 1902, he produced a magazine called *The Rambler* with Richard Le Gallienne, intended to be a revival of Samuel Johnson's periodical of the same name. After the turn of the twentieth century, Vivian wrote a number of novels, some anonymously or using pseudonyms, which were met with mixed reviews. *The Master Sinner* was described in *The Publisher's Circular* as "unpleasant but clever", and in *The Literary World* as having a "style [which was] jerky and overladen with adjectives", but still "a readable book".

Vivian wrote a number of travel books, the most well-known being *Servia: The Poor Man's Paradise*, published in 1897, which was widely quoted in newspapers, including *The New York Times*, the *Morning Post* and *Pearson's Weekly*.

In 1901, he wrote a book on European religious rituals with his wife Olive, which was described in the *Sheffield Independent* as "well written, curious and readable, and marred only by a singularly fatuous surrender to any form of superstition however grovelling". In 1902, Vivian interviewed the French novelist Joris-Karl Huysmans.

In 1903, Vivian returned to the subject of Serbia, writing *The Servian Character* for the *English Illustrated Magazine*. He followed this with his second book on the region, *The Servian Tragedy: With Some Impressions of Macedonia* published in 1904, which detailed the coup d'état against the Serbian royal family. The book was generally well-received, being described in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*:

The author has a thorough personal knowledge of the country, was received in audience by the late King and Queen, and is personally acquainted with

all the statesmen. The Belgrade catastrophe is minutely described from full particulars obtained first hand.

It received a less positive review in the London Daily News:

Mr. Herbert Vivian's new book...presents many interesting chapters on the events leading up to the recent tragedy, but can hardly be looked upon as an authoritative history. The matter is thin, the author does not quote his authorities; and he is too evidently willing to accept hearsay in place of evidence.

Vivian was a personal friend of Winston Churchill, and met with him several times in the 1900s, seeking political gossip and advice. In 1905, Vivian published the first interview given by Churchill, published in The Pall Mall Magazine, which received attention in the press. Vivian also interviewed David Lloyd George, the President of the Board of Trade for The Pall Mall Magazine and wrote for The Fortnightly Review.

In 1904, Vivian made a political speech containing pointed remarks about George Bernard Shaw. Shaw and Vivian exchanged letters on the matter, which Vivian then published, much to Shaw's chagrin:

The publication of my letter to Mr. Vivian was a piece of humourous cruelty in which I had no part. I honestly gave Mr. Vivian the best advice I could in his own interest in a letter obviously not intended for publication; and if he had acted quietly upon it, instead of sending it off to the papers... he might still have a chance at a seat in the next Parliament.... I shall not pretend to be sorry that I have helped Mr. Bowerman, the accredited Labour candidate, to disable an opponent who, if he had played his cards skilfully, might have proved very dangerous...
Yours, G. Bernard Shaw

In 1908, he proposed a gambling "system" for roulette, published in The Evening Standard. His system relied on the gambler's fallacy and it was thoroughly debunked by Sir Hiram Maxim in the Literary Digest in October 1908. In 1908, Vivian wrote to his friend Winston Churchill, asking for an exequatur for his appointment as Montenegro's consul in London.

Vivian continued to publish books during the First World War, notably his 1917 volume Italy at War, which despite its title was largely a travelogue. He attempted to join the Ministry of Information and met with both Lord Beaverbrook and John Buchan as part of these efforts, but his services were not required, though Buchan admitted to Jacobite sympathies during their meeting. Vivian instead returned to the Daily Express as their travel correspondent for 1918.

In the 1920s, he worked as a travel journalist for newspapers including The Pall Mall Magazine and The Yorkshire Post. In 1927, he wrote Secret Societies Old and New, which received mixed reviews; The Spectator described it as "well-written and extremely readable", while Albert Mackey noted "the author does not possess sufficient knowledge for his task".

In 1932, he returned to the subject of European political history and Legitimism, publishing The Life of the Emperor Charles of Austria. This was the first biography of Charles published in English, and it received a positive review in the Belfast News Letter. He also continued to write

about the Balkans, publishing an article in The English Review in 1933 about racial tensions in Yugoslavia.

Vivian's writing was noted during his lifetime, and afterwards; he is listed in the 1926 edition of Who's Who in Literature, and the 1967 New Century Handbook of English Literature. His books and articles on Serbia remain widely quoted in modern histories of the region. In 2013, Serbia: The Poor Man's Paradise was described by Radmila Pejic as:

A major contribution to British travel writing about Serbia with its in-depth analysis and rather objective portrayal of the country's political system, religious practices and economic situation

POLITICAL CANDIDATE

In 1889, Vivian attempted to stand as a candidate in the Dover by-election. He withdrew and later alleged that the Irish journalist and candidate for Galway Borough, T. P. O'Connor, had stepped in to prevent his candidacy.

In April 1891, Vivian announced he was standing in the East Bradford constituency, for the Jacobite "Individualist Party" of which he was the sole member. By May 1891, Vivian was claiming to be the Labour candidate for the seat, though this was denied by the Bradford Trade and Labour Council. During the campaign he was named as a co-respondent in a divorce case (see personal life) which was gleefully reported by the local press. He duly lost the 1892 election to William Sproston Caine.

In 1895, he stood for the North Huntingdonshire constituency, on an explicitly Jacobite platform. The seat was comfortably held by A.E. Fellowes.

Undeterred by his failures, Vivian again sought election after the turn of the century. He was interested in the Deptford constituency where he had helped Wilfrid Blunt's campaign fifteen years earlier. He began to campaign there at the end of 1903, and spoke at a free trade meeting in December, reading letters of support he had received from Winston Churchill and John Dickson-Poynder, the MP for Chippenham. Churchill joined the Liberal party in 1904, and Vivian followed him. He was selected as the Liberal candidate to fight the 1906 election, and Churchill spoke in his support at two meetings. Vivian met with serious opposition to his candidacy, and only received 726 votes, losing heavily to Labour party candidate C. W. Bowerman.

In 1908, Vivian investigated standing as a candidate in the Stirling Burghs constituency, following the death of the former Prime Minister Henry Campbell-Bannerman who had held the seat for the Liberal Party. Vivian again espoused Legitimist views in support of the restoration of the House of Stuart. In the end, he did not stand and the seat was won by Arthur Ponsonby.

FASCIST SYMPATHIES

In 1920, Vivian met Benito Mussolini and Gabriele D'Annunzio in Italy and became an admirer of fascism, particularly Italian Fascism. In 1926, he wrote about his visits to Mussolini's Italy:

I find most useful, instead of a passport, is a copy of the first Fascist newspaper, for which I wrote an article in 1920... These fascist syndicates everywhere are not unlike the Soviets, and Fascism is very

like Bolshevism in many ways. Except that one means well, and the other not. Fascism is certainly succeeding... All the public services go like clockwork, trains arrive to the tick.

In May 1929, Vivian and Hugh George de Willmott Newman founded the Royalist International, a group with the stated aims of opposing the spread of Bolshevism and the restoration of the monarchy, but with a clear pro-fascist agenda. Vivian was the General Secretary, and the editor of the league's publication, the Royalist International Herald. Newman was 24 at the time; he went on to be ordained a Bishop in the independent Catholic church and an Archbishop in the Catholicate of the West, and was involved with Aleister Crowley's Ordo Templi Orientis. In 1933, Vivian wrote:

"Monarchy...[is] a more satisfactory form of government than the insidious poisons of a plutocracy [and] the distorted democracy of Parliaments... the world's galloping consumption will not be arrested until... Kings forget their ancient animosities to unite in a Royalist International uncontaminated and unhampered by the lying, cowardly, malignant Spirit of the Age."

In 1936, he published *Fascist Italy*, in which he openly expressed his admiration for the Italian fascist regime. The book received a scathing review in the Nottingham Journal: "A facile writer of travel guides... Herbert Vivian must be read as an amusement of a rather grim sort than as an education... This is a book which need to be taken too seriously, but which may be worth reading with no more attention than is given to works which claim, as this one does not, to be mainly fiction". The Dundee Evening Telegraph review noted: "[Vivian] writes with rapturous enthusiasm. Mussolini is to him a 'saviour', who 'restored order and glory and pride, cured his country in her calenture, create an imperial future with traditions of ancient Rome'...Inasmuch as it is a mouthpiece for crude propaganda, Mr. Vivian's book is regrettable".

POLITICAL VIEWS

Vivian's political views varied over his lifetime, embracing at times one-nation Toryism, free-trade liberalism and open fascism. Indeed, he often seemed more interested in the mechanisms of power and the power of persuasive political speech than in consistent policies or positions.

During his failed campaign for the 1891 Bradford East by-election he wrote:

I preach fanatically the gospel of individualism according to John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer. The first principle of this gospel is that everyone must be allowed to do whatever he pleases so long as his doing so does not interfere with the liberty of others to do the same. I am a staunch free trader, desiring the abolition of that curse of civilisation, the custom house. I protest against all monopolies, whether exercised by un-wieldy State departments, or by grasping individuals, and I support the claims of all nationalities to the management of their own affairs.

Some of his beliefs were consistent: he held racist views from the early days:

We have already proclaimed ourselves to be hand in glove with a remote island of yellow dwarfs; this policy will doubtless be extended...for

every fetish-worshipping savage, for every murderous nigger, for every naked monster who can offer us assistance in our general conspiracy to obtain universal empire.

—Editorial by Vivian, quoted to Edward Gouling by Winston Churchill
He was noted for his "extreme monarchist views" throughout his life, and became antagonistic towards democracy. His 1933 book *Kings in Waiting*—in which he wrote "Democracy, liberty, and prosperity had been the mirages that had attracted the nations to their shambles"—was noted for its passionate pro-Monarchist and anti-Democratic stance.

He was a prominent British Serbophile, and an early proponent of a Greater Serbia that encompassed most of the territory of Macedonia.

PERSONAL LIFE

When Vivian was 27 he was named as co-respondent in a divorce case. In 1891, he had met Henry Simpson and his wife Maud Mary Simpson in Venice and he became a frequent visitor to their home. Henry Simpson was an artist and a friend of Whistler. The Simpson's travelled on to Paris, where Mrs. Simpson confessed that Vivian had proposed to her. The Simpsons then returned to London, and Mrs. Simpson left her husband and demanded a divorce, as she and Vivian were living together in Bognor Regis under the assumed names of Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn. The Simpsons's divorce was granted in December 1892.

On 22 June 1893, Vivian married Maud Mary Simpson. Maud pursued her ambition to become an actress, and in 1895 she travelled to Holland, where she abandoned Vivian for a Mr. Sundt of the Norwegian Legation in Amsterdam. The marriage ended in divorce in 1896.

On 30 September 1897, Vivian married Olive Walton, the daughter of Frederick Walton the inventor of linoleum. Herbert and Olive were well known on the London social scene in the years immediately after the First World War, and are mentioned in Anthony Powell's memoir *Infants of the Spring* throwing a lavish luncheon in honour of Aleister Crowley. Powell notes that their "marriage did not last long, but was still going at this period". Olive maintained a lively correspondence with Powell's father for many years after the divorce.

He was made a Knight of the Royal Serbian Order of Takovo in 1902, and a Commander of the Royal Montenegrin Order of Danilo in 1910.

Vivian died on 18 April 1940, at Gunwalloe in Cornwall, 17 miles (27 km) from his grandfather's house in St Clement.

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The following books are commonly attributed to Vivian, but at least one source gives Wilfrid Keppel Honnywill as the author.

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Vivian, Herbert (1901). *The Curse of Eden*. London: John Long. (published anonymously)